



SF Phosphates Limited Company

A Utah Limited Liability Company
9401 North Hwy. 191
Vernal, UT 84078-7802
(435) 789-7795

m/047/007

September 10, 1999

Grady L. McNure
Chief, Northwestern Colorado Regulatory Office
402 Rood Avenue, Room 142
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-2563

Dear Mr. McNure:

SF Phosphates is herein responding to your letter dated June 9, 1999 requesting additional information on a number of issues which may affect the permitting mechanism. Specifically, you stated four questions that are summarized as follows:

- 1) Provide an estimate of the cumulative impacts to date.
- 2) Evaluate alternatives to current overburden disposal practices in Hole in the Wall Canyon.
- 3) Ensure resolution of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and 'historic depletions' from the tailings pond.
- 4) Provide plan and cross-sections of proposed fill areas.

Our response is organized according to the questions. Section 1, addressing cumulative impacts was prepared by our consultants, JBR Environmental. Section 2 was prepared and assembled in-house, by our mine operations department. Section 3 is information gathered from the US fish and Wildlife Service, as part of the Bureau of Land Management's Environmental Assessment for eventual expansion of the tails pond onto public land. Section 4 consists of cross-sections and maps not included in section 2.

In addition to these written requests, Sue Nall has also inquired into the history and permit authority associated with overburden disposal into Hole in the Wall Canyon. Research into files existing at the mine provides at least part of this history. Overburden disposal into Hole in the Wall first began in 1981, and has been ongoing intermittently since. Regulation of mining in Utah, whether on private or public land, is primarily under the jurisdiction of the Utah Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (DOGM). DOGM approved the Mine and Reclamation Plan for the Vernal Phosphate Operations in 1983. Overburden disposal in Hole in the Wall Canyon is explicitly addressed on page 19: "Although certain major drainages such as Hole in the Wall Canyon will be backfilled..." In addition, the Utah Division of Environmental Health (now Department of Environmental Quality) issued in 1981 a permit to construct spill control and containment facilities which included the 'french' drain at the bottom of Hole in the Wall fill, above the confluence with Brush Creek. More recently, the 'outfall' below Hole in the Wall Canyon fill has been included in the site Stormwater discharge (NPDES) permit, and has been sampled and chemically analyzed.

If you have any questions on this issue please call me at 435-781-3348.

Sincerely,

Ron Ryan
Environmental Specialist

cc: Anthony A. Gallegos, Utah DOGM

